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OTHERWORLD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POEMS

In the Net of the Stars
Cadences

TRANSLATIONS

The Mosella of Decimus Magnus Ausonius
The Love Poems of Emile Verhaeren
Philip II (in *The Plays* of Emile Verhaeren)

SOME of the poems in this book have appeared in *Poetry and Drama*, *The New Statesman*, *The Egoist*, *Poetry* (of Chicago), *The Poetry Journal* (of Boston, U.S.A.), and in *Some Imagist Poets*, *Some Imagist Poets*, 1916, and *Some Imagist Poets*, 1917; and acknowledgment is hereby made to the editors and publishers of those periodicals.

OTHERWORLD

CADENCES BY F. S. FLINT

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TO
HERBERT READ

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PREFACE

THERE is only one art of writing, and that is the art of poetry ; and, wherever you feel the warmth of human experience and imagination in any writing, there is poetry, whether it is in the form we call prose, or in rhyme and metre, or in the unrhymed cadence in which the greater part of this book is written.

I am not a scholar in any sense ; I have dabbled a little in languages and browsed a little on literature ; but the chance of life has made me a wage-earner since I could read and write almost ; so that, when I invented the term “ unrhymed cadence ” to describe the form of my later poems—I have written rhymes like the rest, and some of them are in this book,—I was not aware that I was in the oldest of English traditions, that Chaucer had said in *His House of Fame* :

And nevertheless hast set thy wyt,
Although that in thy hede ful lyte is,
To makē bokēs, songēs, dytees
In ryme or ellēs in cadence,

or that Cynewulf (as they surmise him to be, and as they translate his *Riddle, The Nightingale*) had sung :

Many varied voices voice I through my mouth.
Cunning are the notes I sing, and incessantly I change them.
Clear I cry and loud ; with the chant within my head ;
Holding to my tones, hiding not their sweetness.
I the old Evening singer, unto earls I bring
Bliss within the burghs, when I burst forth
With a cadenced song. Silent in their dwellings
They are sitting, bending forwards. Say what is my name.

A nightingale is supposed to be singing the original early English of that poem ; but we are not pressing the words too closely, if we say that Cynewulf had in mind, when he used the words “ a cadenced song ”—whatever they may be in his English,—the form of his own poems, and that that form is the real tradition

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of English poetry, and that my own unrhymed cadences and those of other writers are, in fact, a reversion to that tradition ?

I go by instinct in these matters ; and there are many men better equipped with book knowledge than I am who could confound me with their facts, and yet . . . leave me unconvinced. I have seen scansion of Greek choruses which showed that these were nothing more—and certainly nothing less—than cadences, whatever the professors with their tabulated metres and complicated feet and lists of admitted exceptions may say. The Latins, I think, with their more formal minds, had more formal metres ; but they were not better poets. When human nature could stand the Latin empire and the Latin form no longer, Rome fell. We had the so-called dark ages and the poets of whom Remy de Gourmont wrote in *Le Latin Mystique* and Joris-Karl Huysmans in a certain wonderful chapter of *A Rebours*, all taken, probably, from the exhaustive and exhausting work of a German, whose name and the title of whose book I have forgotten. Then there were the troubadours of Southern France and the *trouvères* of Northern France, *langue d'oc* and *langue d'oïl*, and the German Minnesingers, and the wandering students, the Goliardi, with their songs, to which I have not yet been able to come any nearer than John Addington Symonds's *Wine, Women and Song*, a book that has the defects of a trashy name and of not containing the original texts. Somebody had invented or reinvented¹ rhyme in this while ; and the minds, freed

¹ This passage from a letter written by Lorenzo de' Medici in 1465 is interesting : " Fu l'uso della rima, secondo che in una sua latina epistola scrisse il Petrarca, ancora appresso gli antichi Romani assai celebrato. Il quale per molto tempo intermesso cominciò nella Sicilia non molti secoli avanti a rifiorire ; e di qui per la Francia sparto, finalmente in Italia, quasi in un suo ostello, è pervenuto."

from the Roman constraint, broke out into all kinds of complicated rhyme-schemes and rhythm-schemes. Dante's place in the history of prosody is, I take it, not very important. There were *terze rime*, *sonetti*, *canzoni* and *ballate* before him? But, as we move towards the Renaissance, and beyond it—if we are even yet beyond it,—the freedom and technical exuberance we find in the middle ages becomes more and more circumscribed, until . . . *Enfin Malherbe vint*, and Latin formalism is once more set up as the ideal. Whatever may be the exact chronology of this period and its precise data—if you can establish either the one or the others,—this case can at least be made out against rhyme and the metres we use,—that rhyme was invented (or reinvented) by the joyousness of the middle ages as a delightful toy, and that the metres were contrived by poets to show how ingenious they could be, or (such as the English iambic decasyllable, the French alexandrine, the Italian hendecasyllable) were gradually evolved, on the lines of the classical hexameter, as the least common multiple of technical excellence and the greatest common measure of the experience of the age; and that neither has grown nor could grow with our needs, and that they now strangle and stifle the natural cadence of our emotions, which are the driving force behind all poetic expression. (The history of English poetry in verse is the story of the exhaustion of the effects to be obtained from rhyme and metre,—of the exploitation of a mine in which the main lodes have at last given out. It may or may not be foolish to deplore that poetry should have been tied down so long to such a task; but it can hardly be denied that, except for a few poets who have discovered an odd vein that had not been worked, there is no writing

nowadays in metre and rhyme that does not echo with all the feet and all the rhymes of the past, so much so that some poets break up their metres and smother their rhymes, until neither metre nor rhyme has any other function than to ruin the style of their poems. Swinburne gave the *coup de grâce* (and the *coup de Jarnac* too) to English rhyme and metre.

But I am not much concerned with the facts of the history of prosody. No doubt facts can be arranged to prove any mortal or immortal thing that it may chance to be your pleasure or to your advantage to prove. My interest becomes keen and comes from the heart, however, whenever I see a reaction against the tyranny of the dead. Admire their works, by all means, if they are admirable; but do not imitate them. Every generation must find its own formula, express its own promptings, do the one thing that marks it out as that generation,—or perish from all memory. Nietzsche—that great revaluer of all values!—thought that he had disposed of the seeker after new forms when he said that there was probably more genius in the sonnet form than in the man who scorned it. There is probably more genius in the Pyramids than in garden suburbs; but we do not build pyramids, and some of us live in garden suburbs (I do not). Let us say, then, that rhyme and metre are dead or dying devices, that their use brings poetry into contempt (the poetry in verse form, that is); and that, in spite of the number of books of verse by soldiers that appear, it is not the poetry in them that moves us; it is no revival of poetry they signify. But most of the small number of people who read books of verse believe that rhyme and metre are poetry, and to use them is to “write in poetry,”—a grotesque phrase which I have taken from a well-known newspaper

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critic and man of letters. How otherwise are we to explain the popularity, with this small verse-reading public, of verse writers who will perish as surely as Pye has done? Why does the accomplished dullness of Mr. White, for instance, which the critics describe as "the poetic impulse well-disciplined by the conscious artist," or the metric journalese of Mr. Black, which the critics describe as a "rich, clear sonority and a sustained elevation of phrase," or the sugared and diluted Tennysonianism of Mr. Brown, which the critics describe as . . . (how do they describe it?)—why do all these different varieties of death please or appear to please? It may be because we have no critics, or because those who fulfil the part of the critic are mostly journalists, who are obliged by the terms of their occupation to appraise everything in the easy currency of stereotyped phrases, and to allot every man his counter, if he has one; if he has not, then, obviously, he is of no account. But by its very nature a work of art cannot be dealt with in this way. A poem, or any other work of art, requires for its appreciation almost as much genius as went to its making; at any rate, to adapt a phrase from the science of mechanics, action and reaction must be equal and apposite. But journalism is against the receptive revery and the unprejudiced adjustment of the mind which every work of art requires of its critic. We have no critics, I have said. There is certainly Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer; but I could name off-hand half a dozen Frenchmen who, like Mr. Hueffer, are both critics and poets too. Perhaps the only real critic is the poet; perhaps criticism is poetry, as Oscar Wilde seems to have held; and perhaps this age is not rich in poets.

But I do not believe this, because, really, as Mallarmé said, there is no prose, except in advertisements (and even there !); and all our best prose writers are poets, who, somewhat like M. Jourdain, have been writing prose . . . poetry all their lives without knowing it. Some of them, at the end of a long career, have taken to verse, as though they had not been the poets they are ever since they began using their pen to artistic purpose ! What second childishness drives them to abandon the noble cadences of their prose for the hurdy-gurdy tunes of rhyme and metre ? Why do others, in the fullness of their powers, turn aside from time to time to do exercises in this worn-out form, exercises that are cold and artificial and narrow and stiff beside the free grace and breadth and power of their prose, that prose which, as M. André Suarès, in his essay of homage to Charles Péguy, says, is “the form . . . of our time and our own proper creation, a form which is neither prose nor verse, but rather both together” ; and he goes on to say that this new form is the most powerful creation of French art since the prose of the seventeenth century, and to trace its passage through Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Baudelaire, Flaubert and Rimbaud to Péguy ; and he might have added Suarès and so many other names. But this new form—and I believe I am enlarging somewhat the scope of M. Suarès’s dictum—is the natural outcome of European culture. The European was bound in the end to tire of those trickeries and acrobatics of verse-writing which satisfied his forefathers, and to need and to force the issue of a more flexible form of expression, in which the word would, to use Flaubert’s phrase, be glued down right on to the thing. The European of to-day—I will not say the Englishman

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of to-day, because I do not wish to frighten him—demands a clear presentation in his own language of the emotion that moves the writer and the vision he has before him ; and this means the dismissal of our thous and thees and deems and doths and prithees, of unnatural inversions—in a word of “poetic licence.” (There are many people who imagine that “poetic licence” is poetry ; that a line like “I thee do love, my darling, be thou mine,” or a phrase like “sunshine warm”—to take one of the many clumsy inversions of a much-praised poet—is poetry ; while “I love you, Clara ; will you marry me ?” or “warm sunshine,” is *prose*, which, in their mouths, means not poetry.) Clarity and sincerity of speech and purpose are the perennial qualities of all good poetry, and those who will strive after these qualities (since none of us is absolutely clear and sincere, they can only be obtained by hard work), and who will disburden themselves of the lumber bequeathed to them from the past, are the men who will be heard, and who will lift the word poetry out of the contempt in which it is held by the many who do not understand, or despise, or smile tolerantly at the meaningless rituals of verse. (For the poets such as I have in mind, there are the two forms, which are really one, the first being prose and the second I have called unrhymed cadence.) The one merges into the other ; there is no boundary line between them ; but prose, generally, will be used for the more objective branches of writing—for novels, plays, essays and so on—and poetry in this form is accepted with so much goodwill that I have some misgiving in applying to it its rightful name ; cadence will be used for personal, emotional, lyric utterances, in which the phrasing goes with a stronger beat and the words live together

with an intenser flame. If you ask why cadence should not be printed as prose, the reply is that the unequal lines mark the movement of the cadence and its tempo ; and the reply is also that given by M. André Gide, in the preface to *Le Roi Candaule* (it is not my fault that I am obliged to go to France for allies) : “ Certain people have reproached me because a typographic artifice has given the appearance of verse to what is often no more than a clearly measured prose. I can give no other reason than this: from the day on which I conceived the play, thus it is that I have wished it to be, and if, since then, to satisfy a few friends, putting my too free verses end to end, I have had them copied ‘in prose,’ I have never liked the look of them so.”

In this preface, I have kept three propositions before me: the first being that poetry is a quality of all artistic writing, independent of form; the second that rhyme and metre are artificial and external additions to poetry and that, as the various changes that could be rung upon them were worked out, they grew more and more insipid, until they have become contemptible and encumbering; and the third that the artistic form of the future is prose, with cadence—a more strongly accented variety of prose in the oldest English tradition—for lyrical expression.

MARCH, 1918.

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OTHERWORLD.

To R.A.

He is sitting beneath a cherry-tree in bloom,
And the thought of the ripe cherries is in his mouth,
And his eyes love the tall daisies in the grass
And his children playing in the meadow.

The light strikes truly through the lenses of his eyes,
And a fair image falls upon the retina ;
The wind brings him many odours—
Earth, grasses, trees, flowers,
And the oakwood burning in the fireplaces.
His ears catch the rustle and song of many things,
And the taste of the cherries is subtle in his mouth.
He knows by their touch the things that frame his life.

This is he who am I, without my cares and weaknesses ;
The channels of his soul are not clogged ; his life flows
freely ;
And my heart aches at the thought of the millions of
miles of space—
The millions of millions of miles that lie between us.
He is there, I know,—I am there,
Since every combination exists ;
He must be there, I must be there :
I must be happy somewhere.
And yet he is so far away that I am sure
No light from the star that lights and warms him can
reach me,
Even though it travel the unimaginable number of
miles a second
That prove the kinship of light and electricity—
So my physics-master taught me.
They are charlatans, these physicists.

I

There is room in space for every combination : he is
there ;
And he lifts his head and gazes at the cherry-blossom,
And at the sky that must be blue, for me to care for it,
With a scud of white clouds over it
And a warm sun shining through it ;
And he gazes care-free,
For he knows that, just as yesterday,
To-morrow there will be no call upon him,
No invisible, gnawing bondage.
He knows, I say ; but I mean that I know.
He knows that to-morrow will be like to-day and
yesterday,
Full of work that is a pain, a pleasure, and an enlarge-
ment,
With the brain and heart working together with the
hands.

Whatever I imagine, or you imagine, exists :
I can see the lilac in great bushes about my house,
And the laburnums with their rain of gold,
The chestnuts and hawthorns in bloom of red and
white :
These are trees and blossoms that must be there.
There are other worlds, I know, where I walk
In not such pleasant places :
Many that are worse than this on which I write my
dream ;
Many that are hells where I suffer
In greater agony of body and spirit
Than I have known, or shall know.
But there is also this one world, where I am leaving
The cherry-tree in bloom that will bear in due season,
To go back to my work after my morning meditation,
That is more a satisfaction, a feeding, of the senses—

Sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing—
 Than the probing and the solving of a problem.
 If the five pathways of my soul are free and clean-
 swept
 (As they are) for the swift feet of sensation,
 Thought is joyance, and its words are songs and images.
 These I carry with me to the long room that is mine,
 Where my books are in their clean white cases,
 And the wide oaken table that bears my papers—
 A firm and solid table, whose strength is a friendly
 pleasure,
 With its drawers that slide so smoothly in and out
 That you think always of its maker as a brother.
 On my walls I have placed (they are there now)
 Pictures and drawings by my friends,
 Which have not so much the shape of what they see
 about them
 As the form of their souls—the curves and lines, the
 colours
 That call to mind their talk, their actions,
 And the intimate, wordless conversation by which you
 love them.
 I have a chair, designed and carved for me by the
 carpenter
 Who lives in the house behind the ash-trees,
 Where the road turns at right-angles
 To go through the village—
 The carpenter whose garden is full of roses,
 That clamber up and over the walls and roof of his
 house.
 He comes to me sometimes of an evening,
 And talks of the stars, the constellations,
 That light the nocturnal dreams of this far-away
 world.
 And he proves to me—

Taking them star by star, and building them petal by
petal—
That they form on the whole black dome
The shape of a cluster of roses.
Sometimes, in return, I read to him some of my poems,
And he laughs in a queer way,
With his hand on his chin in his beard,
And his eyes on the roses he has brought me,
That stand near the lamp on my table.
This is the room where I write my poems,
Where I become conscious through them
Of what my wife and children and friends,
My orchard, the meadows, the trees, the grasses, the
flowers,
The roads, the hills, and the sea mean to me ;
And I put it into words and rhythms that explain
nothing,
But that open the mind and the heart
To a new sunshine and new perfumes.

(I have just gone out to look at the night ; beyond there
—oh, how far beyond !—
Is the star I speak of, is the man I know to be myself—
but yet how different !
The pollard plane-trees are wretched in the damp and
darkness and mud ;
The air bites rawly on your ribs, and the sky is full of
menace.)

Must I tell you of each moment of my day, for you to
know
Why I have chosen this one world of all the myriads ?
How, in the morning, as the sunshine enters my
bedroom,
Dream after dream falls from me,

And I awake to the greater dream of this full life,
 And my brain is rich with words and visions,
 And my heart is eager with emotions
 That have grown there in the night
 From the seed of yesterday ?
 Through the open, inner door I hear in the next room
 The rustling and the stirring of my mate,
 The mother of my children ;
 And she hears me, too, I know, but we do not speak :
 Is there need to ?
 She knows the meaning of my silence,
 And she will not jar the full cup of my morning
 treasures.
 It is all, and yet how much,
 If I see her golden head
 In the mirror of her room ;
 And she turns, and, seeing me watching,
 Smiles to the mirror ;
 For her smile seems to overarch with the blue of her
 eyes,
 And to fill with tenderness the world I bear within
 me—
 All that field of tall grasses that is singing
 With the hum of bees in the buttercups and clover,
 And the music of the morning wind
 Sifting its notes through the innumerable, earth-held
 strings.
 My children, too, have learned to love my strange
 ways ;
 I hear their voices, and they hear me
 As I pass down to my walk in the orchard
 Beneath the plum-trees ;
 But their door does not open.
 Not till I have caught all the words and the rhythms
 With which my heart and brain are busy

Shall I see them.
The plum-trees are in bloom,
And the air smells sweet with hawthorn.
If I stop and lean on my gate,
I can see a mile away the blue-brown hills,
Beyond wide meadows, flowering hedges, cornland.
And the words come to my pencil unsought,
The beginning and the end, perhaps,
With a phrase or two and full knowledge of the rest,
Images, a rhythm, a complete passage,
The outline, with some parts roughed in, of my
poem—

A song as artless as the thrush's on the plum-tree.

* * *

To-morrow I shall wake up tired and heavy-minded,
With a bitter mouth and bleared eyes.
Sluggishly, reluctantly, I shall pull myself from my
bed.

I shall thrust on my shabby clothes and wash my face
and hands ;

Put on a collar and tie, a coat and waistcoat, all in
haste,

Drink a cup of hot tea, eat a few mouthfuls of bread
and butter ;

Then, with a hurried kiss to wife and children,

Run down the stairs into the miserable street.

All I meet are shabby, all go one way,

Drawn on by the same magnet, urged by the same
demon.

We are the respectable ; and behind us, though we do
not see him,

Driving us with his goad, is hunger—the first law of
our land.

He emmeshes us, he regiments us, he drills us to obey
his time.

For him we hurry through the dust or the mud,
through the cold or heat,
To the slave-pens. For him we shove at each other
at the tramcars,
Crowd elbow to elbow in the tubes, through which we
are hurled,
Packed and swaying. For him we sell our soul's
freedom,
Obey men we do not respect, do trivial things that
mean nothing to us,
And only have meaning as part of the whole machine
that we serve.
O, irony, irony, that we should be gaoler and gaoled
In a prison of our own making that we might destroy
to-morrow !
It is not labour that kills, but the lack of faith in the
labourer.

To-morrow I shall pass the best hours of my day
Pent up with people who do not speak the language I
seek,
And who would not understand it if it were found.
I shall write on papers, according to rules,
Words that might fit my language if they were free ;
But they are debased and chipped and worn and
crushed,
And they answer words that are driven together by
use,
And not joined by mastery, a slave language of
counters.
I shall come home through the darkened streets,
Tired and brooding over the lost hours,
And loathing the weakness that led me to waste my
strength
In argument that started from no point of worth,

And was borne on by no sustenance,
A mere frittering of words in known phrases,
A reaction against boredom and dulness,
And the killing of life hour by hour
On a chair before a table with dusty papers
And formulas invented to ensure uniformity,
The wonder being that so many find themselves so well
of it all,

And see no wrong, and ask only for promotion.
How I hate myself in these moments,
Tear at my weakness with the claws of my mind,
And gasp out aloud in the streets the thoughts that
rend me.

As I stalk along, overtaking all who are before me,
The darkness and drabness around me suiting my
mood

And crushing me further still into myself ;
And I become a black ferment of half-born thoughts
And still-born desires and unborn emotions,
Curdled with hates and ragings, and nigh to tears.
One word of love and understanding would turn my
poison into wine :

But do you find love and understanding in the
City ?

Seventeen years have I passed there, and have not
found them ;

But you are luckier perhaps than I, who have always
been

A stranger within the walls and between them,
Knowing the hatred of crowds, the sneers of passers,
The jeers and the laughter of the clipped and maimed
and castrated.

Their poor, docked lives have held no beauty ;
Their lamps have been choked,
And the guttering wick has stunk their souls out,

Whether they wear gold chains and good leather and
cloth,
Or a greasy cap and torn shoddy.

* * *

But on the star, the light of whose sun
Has not yet reached the earth, and may never reach it,
I come in to breakfast clean of body and rich of mind,
And hungry with the morning air.
My boy sits before a bowl of purple wild pansies,
And my girl has a slender green jar of red poppies,
Whose hairy stalks spring from a blue cluster of
speedwells.

They have been out in the fields, barefoot in the long
wet grass,
The meadow foxtails brushing their legs with a silky
touch ;
And they shook the jewels from the heart of the clover,
As they passed and sang with the birds.
They have seen the robin still on her nest in the ivy-
hedge,

Looking at them from her ivy-leaf door
With stubborn, half-frightened eyes ;
And they have gone on and gathered
More than the poppies and pansies and speedwells,
More than the primroses and violets
From the banks of the stream for their mother
—They lie in a bowl before her,
As she serves them with bread and butter and
honey—

They have taken something, too, of the heart of the
season
Into their hearts ;
Its leaves and grasses will always be green there ;
Its blossoms will always be bright ;
Its birds will always be singing their morning song ;

But more than all these,
The intimate sense of a presence will always be with
them.

O my wife,
You sit there, happy in your service,
Giving to each as we need them,
Fruit and milk and eggs and bread and butter and
honey :

Can I ever love you enough
For your understanding and your forbearance ?
Can I ever repay you
For your loving kindness, O my golden-hearted ?
O my young ash-tree, my lilac blossom, my golden
wheatfield !

You have entrusted to me a treasure of many memories,
And I have not been careful of them.

I have opened the store, and given them out to my
friends,

All those who would accept them,
And they have grown in beauty as I touched them ;
And the frail bloom of them,
That might have perished in darkness, fallen to dust,
Has become a wonderful, indestructible word ;
And you have forgiven me.

But when I love you and you love me,
They glow still, fused in our love ;
Their warmth is about us ;
And the chairs and tables, the pictures and sculptures,
The books and bookcases,
All the pleasant things that furnish and comfort our
lives,

Love through us and in us.

Oh, my heart yearns to you, and a great breath swells
my chest.

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See, I will leave my chair, and with my hand on the
door-latch,
I will turn and smile at your eyes that watch me
trustfully.
I will go and gather a rose for you,
A white rose flushed with red
And tinged with the gold of sunburn—
A rose with a firm heart and a lovely curve of petals ;
And from the tree, as I come to it,
A nightingale will fly away.
And when I return with it in my hand,
And offer it to you silently,
Your eyes will thank me,
And you will smell it, and you will gaze at
The violets and primroses the children have gathered,
And your hand will seek mine, almost timidly, and
caress it.

* * *

And now in the afternoon,
When the children are at their school,
Three meadows away,
Hidden by hedges and a row of Lombardy poplars,
And their mother is teaching them and their play-
mates,
I sit dreaming on the verandah in the shade.
The warm sun falls on the crowfeet and buttercups
In the field before me ;
The golden flowers nod and wave and kiss
As a light, warm wind passes over them.
The leaves are singing ;
And faintly behind their monotone,
I hear the singing of children.
Mournfully, a cuckoo calls, “ Cuck-ooo ! ”
A blackbird scuttles from a spinney ;
And I sit in a dream

And drink my coffee
 And smoke my cigarette.
 But the gate of the garden in front of the house
 Swings open and crashes back ;
 A well-known footstep comes up the path,
 A well-known voice calls my name :
 " Franky, come out, you stodge ! "
 " Is that you, Dicky ? Sit down, will you ?
 Take a cigarette, and try to live as you were meant to.
 Don't be vigorous after lunch ! "
 " *Cinæde* Franky ! "
 " *Fatue bos*, Dicky ! "
 " *Sale turc* ! "
 " *Etalon impuissant que nargue la jument* ! "
 " *Coglione* ! "
 " *O poetaccio* ! "
 We laugh at each other.
 " Come down by Vale Water to the cliff-walk
 Round to Westhaven and back by the riverside."
 " Good ! I'm with you. I'll get my stick,
 And meet you at the gate."

We swing out into the road bare-headed ;
 Three ash-trees in flower
 And a laburnum raining with gold greet us.
 Over the hill we go, and down
 Into the valley by the side of the river,
 That roars like the sea over its stones.
 The silver oaks climb up the hill from the water's
 edge,
 And are lost high up in a mist of grey silver,
 Of trunk and twig and bud,
 And along the banks the primroses never leave us.
 Oh, the strides and the breaths we take,
 The jests we make, and our laughter !

Our silence is even a greater joy than these,
And our thoughts then wear the mask
That our eyes put on them,—
Hedge of ivy and cottage-garden,
Brown roads and woods around and above it ;
But our thoughts are deeper because of the mask
And our silence.

A brook crosses the road : we stride through it.
Everywhere there are primroses :
Along the river, under the hedge, in the garden,
Up the slopes in the clearings,
Under the first oak-trees,
In a small meadow between the road and river,
Where the road turns to go to the sea,
And our path to the cliff begins.

Up by the pinewood ; our feet crunch on the gravel ;
Our breathing becomes hard,
And we stab at the path before us with our sticks.
Higher and higher we climb,
Till we reach the path round the cliff.
Oh, the golden glory of the gorse,
And the golden brown of last year's bracken,
Which holds in its heart the green curl of the new !
And then as we round a corner
The blue glory of the sea !

I have not the heart to go on.
Is my friend at my side,
Crying his joy of the seagulls, descrying a cormorant ?
Do we climb down these cliffs,
Catching at the grass for hold,
Slipping on the granite outcrop,
Starting a rabbit, rousing the seagulls

To wheel and squeal round their eyries far below ?
Are these the woods of twisted oak-saplings,
Fantastic and silvern,
Through which the path winds ?
Is the blue that curtains the spaces
Between the branches
The sea ?
And more than these,
Am I aware of the noble heart beating near me ?
Do I see the laughing, generous, truthful eyes ?
Do I hear the voice that sometimes mocks, then jests,
Then speaks of a poem ?

My friend said to me as I marched by his side in the
night
Through the mud of Waterloo Road,
“ This is the finest draft that has ever left England,
Picked men, all non-commissioned officers, held back
for months.”
And the head of the column, out of sight away in the
darkness,
Roared out a marching chorus,
Taken up and humorously turned by the men in the
rear.
Windows opened, and women’s voices cheered on the
soldiers,
Who answered with jests and offered to kiss them
(And the kiss was taken, but not in a way they knew).
Through the mud, through the mud they went.
And at the bends of the road the lamp of the column-
leader
Burned the blackness with red for a moment.
Four-deep they went, strong young men,
Jesting and singing and laughing,
With broad backs bearing their packs,

And broad chests breathing great breaths of the cold,
 damp air,—
 Life at its cleanest,
 Moving swiftly through the half-dead evil
 And the filth of the sleeping city.
 And when they arrived at London Bridge,
 And stood in the gas-lit, frowsy station,
 The sweat was on their face, and the hall was filled
 With the smell of healthy men.
 What was my friend doing there,
 The singer of beautiful things, the beautiful singer ?
 What was any man of that company—
 Clerk, shopkeeper, labourer, poet—
 Doing each with the other,
 Clothed and loaded alike and marching together,
 With the thought of each man's heart and brain
 written off,
 And their common manhood
 Trained to move in one direction and to fit one shape ?
 What is war ? . . . What are nations ?
 My friend has gone from me ; I could not have even
 him ;
 And yet in those men
 There was so much kindness, so much humour,
 And so little desire to kill.

* * *

You may not believe in my other world ; but it is
 no dream.
 It can be proved with compass and scales and a plus b .
 Who will integrate space and time and prove that the
 sum
 Does not contain the quantity I describe ?
 Or all the grades of good and evil for every man,
 Forming throughout the myriad universes
 A myriad perfect men and perfect minds ?

If the scale exists, can one note judge of another,
Or say it is too remote, and the instrument too vast,
To exist for any purpose or use or harmony ?
What are uses and purposes ? Can the note hear the
 song ?
Therefore, as I sit here, dreaming and writing of that
 other me
Whom I have chosen from the myriad men who bear
 my nature,
He is sitting beneath a cherry-tree in bloom,
Watching the afterglow of sunset and the evening
 stars.
He is sitting in the quiet and peace of the evening
And the peace of the winds ;
The darkness is creeping up behind him from the
 hills ;
He does not stir ; the first cold shiver of evening has
 not come.
Perhaps in this calm and the calm of his mind he
 thinks of me.

DUSK

Here where the brown leaves fall
From elm and chestnut and plane-tree ;
Here where the brown leaves drift
Along the paths to the lake
Where the waterfowl breast the waves
That are ridged by the wind,—

You spoke of your art and life,
Of men you had known who betrayed you,
Men who fell short of friendship
And women who fell short of love ;
But, abiding beyond them, your art
Held you to life, transformed it, became it,
And so you were free.

And I told you of all my weakness,—
My growing strength to resist
The appeal to my heart and eyes
Of sorrowful, beautiful things ;
And the strength of this outer husk
I had permitted to grow and protect me
Was its pitiful measure.

You said : There are cracks in the husk.
It grew to your measure perhaps once ;
But your heart breaks through it, and soon
It will fall away from you.
Like a tree content with its fate,
You would not have known it was there
If it had grown to remain.

The cold wind blew the brown leaves
On to the lovers beneath,

Who crept close together for warmth
And closer still for love.

The peacocks perched in the branches
Hawked their harsh cry at the golden
Round moon that loomed over the tree-tops.

And the sound of our feet on the gravel
For a time was answer enough
To the broken mesh of our thoughts.

I said : I have wife and children,
A girl and a boy : I love them ;
The gold of their hair is all the gold
Of my thoughts ; the blue of their eyes
Is all the purity of my vision ;
The rhythm of their life is more to be watched
Than the cadences of my poems.

And you asked me :
Have you taken refuge behind them ?
Do you not fear to lose your life
In saving it for them ?
Be brave ! The water is deep,
The waves run high ; but you are a swimmer :
Strike out !

The cold wind blew the brown leaves
Deeper and deeper into the dusk ;
The peacocks had hushed their cries ;
The moon had turned her gold into silver,
And between the black lace of two trees
One star shone clearly.

O night !
Have I deserved your beauty ?

GLOOM

I sat there in the dark
Of the room and of my mind
Thinking of men's treasons and bad faith,
Sinking into the pit of my own weakness
Before their strength of cunning.
Out over the gardens came the sound of some one
Playing five-finger exercises on the piano.

Then
I gathered up within me all my powers
Until outside of me was nothing :
I was all—
All stubborn, fighting sadness and revulsion.

And one came from the garden quietly,
And stood beside me.
She laid her hand on my hair ;
She laid her cheek on my forehead,—
And caressed me with it ;
But all my being rose to my forehead
To fight against this outside thing.
Something in me became angry ;
Withstood like a wall,
And would allow no entrance ;
I hated her.

“What is the matter with you, dear ?” she said.
“Nothing,” I answered,
“I am thinking.”
She stroked my hair and went away ;
And I was still gloomy, angry, stubborn.

Then I thought :
She has gone away ; she is hurt ;

c

She does not know
What poison has been working in me.

Then I thought :
Upstairs, her child is sleeping ;
And I felt the presence
Of the fields we had walked over, the roads we had
followed,
The flowers we had watched together,
Before it came.

She had touched my hair, and only then did I feel it ;
And I loved her once again.

And I came away,
Full of the sweet and bitter juices of life ;
And I lit the lamp in my room,
And made this poem.

LOVE SONG FOR A WOMAN I DO NOT LOVE

If I were a rich man, would you smile at me ?
Can your bosom that swells your blouse so firmly
 be bought
And all the smooth warmth of your nakedness ?
You are straight and beautiful,
Your hair is black and you have slender ankles.
I have seen the bloom and colour of your face on
 peaches ;
I have felt the grace of your walk in Grecian statues ;
And, as you go, you look back over your shoulder
 sideways ;
Coquette ! you were born in the age that bore me,
And almost I love you, my dark goddess !

But if I came to you and said to you, I am rich ;
I know a suburb : I know a house there ; will you
 have it ?
It has a red-tiled roof ; it has two gardens ;
It has casement windows with small leaded panes
And white curtains fluttering from them when they
 are opened.
It is furnished with old fumed oak and shining silver,
And armchairs stuffed with hair, with cushions of
 soft down,
And they are covered with bright-coloured cretonnes.
It has a bedroom smelling of the summer sky,
And a kitchen warm with enamelled saucepans and
 polished copper.
Would you have it, knowing that on any day
I might walk up that street beneath the acacias,
Open the garden gate, maybe pick a rose from the
 garden,
Let myself into the house with my key, and, perhaps
 c221

Not finding you in the hall—blue tiles, a mat, a
hatstand—

Pass upstairs to the bedroom, and surprise you at
your mirror,

Masked in the scented darkness of your waving hair ?
Would your eyes, meeting mine in the mirror, smile
welcome ?

Would there be a tense block of silence in the silent
house,

And a tenser wordless message from your eyes to mine
And mine to yours, in the mirror, stabbing our hearts ?

But I am not rich, and I do not love you ;
And I cannot give you the things your heart would
prize, I know.

In spite of the grace you have captured from the
lilies,

And the bloom you have taken from the red geraniums,
And the curves you have stolen from the lissome
ash-trees,

I may not tempt you.

CHILDREN

These are my children—one boy, one girl ;
They have the beauty all children have ;
They have entered the trap all children enter,
The trap that was set by God knows who.

These are the flowers of love and spring—
The apple-blossom and daffodils.
But they do not know, children and flowers,
That the ground beneath them is what it is ;
The sun and the rain, their laughter and tears,
Are all that they know.

I watch them at play, and I know the part
I have played myself in luring them here.
I, too, was once in the outer forest,
And, decoyed like them, have brought them in
To be decoys in their turn perhaps
To my grandchildren (will they be mine ?) ;
And so it goes on, father and son, daughter and
mother.

But they look at me with their trustful eyes,
And they laugh at me in their games and graces.
They come and caress me, they love me so,
The thoughtless-treacherous, eagerly lecherous
Knave and husband whom they call father,
The man who betrayed them to certain death.

And I am their wistful comrade and watchdog.
I go with them sometimes into the streets,
Among the crowds, and I share their wonder,
A child with my children ; and my man's form
And my man's strength is their contrite shield,
And my heart is a pool of tenderness for them.

For they do not know what the earth is yet,
Nor what the clay can be to the body.
When they know, they will no longer be children,
But one link the more in the chain of treason.
And so it goes on, father and son, daughter and
mother.

ENVY

I envy you, I envy you,
Amid the rumble and hoot and clatter
Of London's traffic.

Happy pair !
Your left and right hands drop
And find each other
And wring each other.

White in the sun
From hat to shoes,
Only the pink of your ankles showing
Through the white stockings.

Straight-limbed,
Firm-bosomed,
Soft in the folds of your blouse.

And you, O Youth,
With the flush on your cheeks,
In your eyes a happy admiration,
I envy you.

Your hands seek and wring each other ;
Your limbs attract each other
Through their clothing ;
And you would marry
If this and that concurred.
Foolish, oh foolish !
It is not your youth,
Your straightness, your cleanness, your bloom,
I envy :
It is your virginity.

You would part with it in a burst of joy,
And would not know your loss,
Perceiving it.

But beauty,— . . .
Do you not feel it upon you ? . . .
Strive to reach the grape, but do not pluck it.
The gesture is all.

EAU-FORTE

On black bare trees a stale cream moon
Hangs dead, and sours the unborn buds.

Two gaunt old hacks, knees bent, heads low,
Tug, tired and spent, an old horse tram.

Damp smoke, rank mist fill the dark square ;
And round the bend six bullocks come.

A hobbling, dirt-grimed drover guides
Their clattering feet—
 their clattering feet !
 to the slaughterhouse.

PRAYER

As I walk through the streets,
I think of the things
That are given to my friends :
Myths of old Greece and Egypt,
Greek flowers, Greek thoughts,
And all that incandescence,
All that grace,
Which I refuse.

If even the orchards of England,
Its gardens and its woods,
Its fields and its hills,
Its rivers and its seas,
Were mine ;
But they are not.

But these are nothing.
Give me the flame, O Gods,
To light these people with,
These pavements, this motor traffic,
These houses, this medley.

Give me the vision,
And they may live.

IN THE CATHEDRAL

I have not dipped my hand in the stoup,
Nor bent my knee towards the altar
Far away at the end of the nave.
The crucifix towers dimly above it.
Is this my God ?

The Stations of the Cross
Are white on the dull-brown brickwork.
Poor naked cathedral !
One pillar alone is clothed
With green marble.

Oh gloom of the aisles,
And darkness made darker
By the candles burning in corners
Here and there
In front of the images !

Why am I moved ?
Is this the house of my God ?

The voices of the priests far-off
Near the altar
Have sound and no meaning as words ;
But they fill the church with life
And peace and resignation.
The music of it enters my heart.

O God, you need me, I know,
Or why am I here, why am I ?
You will not cast me off,
You cannot—O God, I say it
With a humble and desperate heart.
I am the least worthy atom of your Person,
But part of you, or nothing at all.

And this poor woman,
Kneeling in her ragged clothes
Before her saint with the ten lighted candles,
Is happier than I.
Her worn and battered face
Is shining with certainty.
She is in heaven, and I . . .
My heart is twisted with sobs,
And my eyes are weeping . . .

And yet, as I leave the cathedral,
I do not dip my hand in the stoup.

DEVONSHIRE

The little Heddon roars over its stones towards its
mouth

Between two cliffs mounting up, one with the grey-
brown haze

Of the budding oak-woods and the line of the path
athwart them,

As though cut with a knife ;

And the other grey with loose shale, and here and
there

The gorse in bloom over the dead, brown bracken,

That springs again, green once more, from its death.

The little Heddon roars over its stones between

Its violets, primroses and celandines to the sea.

And, friends, what am I doing here beside you and the
Heddon ?

Why did I come to you with my heart-ache and my
cares,

Falsely to brighten your life with the foil of my
darkness ?

Why did I come to your pine-woods ?

The little Heddon roars over its stones to the sea.

My life grated on in its groove, and that groove

Brought me to you, but see ! the little Heddon roared
over my brain,

And for a day washed the mist from it, cleared the
clog of it,

And the groove is no longer there.

Yet I shall leave you ; I shall take back my groove,

With a keener edge to my heart-ache and a different
tune :

The little Heddon roaring over my brain to the sea !

HACKNEY MARSHES

The mist creeps up from the long canal
Over the fields, and the colour fades
From the smoke in the sky,
And fades from the crimson sunset.

On the wet grass
Men and young women playing
Hush, and their rarer shouts
Break into the silence.

Beyond a feathery row of leafless poplars
The road lies,
And the swift lights of the tramcars
Leap in patterns
From tree to tree.

Suddenly
A roar from ten thousand throats,
A hidden army of men,
Bursts the calm of the universe;
And the world reels and sinks,
And the lights of the tramcars
Change into constellations—
Plough and Scorpion and Cassiopeia—
That change again as the world sinks
Farther and farther and the firmament
Whirls its myriad lamps
Through the eternal, infinite darkness.

CHALFONT SAINT GILES

The low graves are all grown over
With forget-me-nots,
And a rich-green grass
Links each with each.
Old family vaults,
Some within railings,
Stand here and there,
Crumbling, moss-eaten,
With the ivy growing up them
And diagonally across
The top projecting slab.
And over the vaults
Lean the great lilac bushes,
With their heart-shaped leaves
And their purple and white blossom.
A wall of ivy shuts off the darkness
Of the elm-wood and the larches.

Walk quietly
Along the mossy paths ;
The stones of the humble dead
Are hidden behind the blue mantle
Of their forget-me-nots ;
And before one grave so hidden
A widow kneels, with head bowed,
And the crape falling
Over her shoulders.

The bells for evening church are ringing,
And the people come gravely
And with red, sunburnt faces
Through the gates in the wall.

Pass on ;
This is the church porch,
And within the bell-ringers,
Men of the village in their Sunday clothes,
Pull their bob-major
On the red and white grip
Of the bell-ropes, that fly up,
And then fall snakily.
They stand there given wholly
To the rhythm and swing
Of their traditional movements.

And the people pass between them
Into the church ;
But we are too sad and too reverent
To enter.

LUNCH

Frail beauty,
Green, gold and incandescent whiteness,
Narcissi, daffodils,
You have brought me spring and longing,
Wistfulness,
In your irradiance.

Therefore, I sit here
Among the people
Dreaming,
And my heart aches
With all the hawthorn blossom,
The bees humming,
The light wind upon the poplars,
And your warmth and your love
And your eyes . . .
They smile and know me.

TUBE

You look in vain for a sign,
For a light in their eyes. No !
Stolid they sit, lulled
By the roar of the train in the tube,
Content with the electric light,
Assured, comfortable, warm.
Despair ?
For a moment, yes :
This is the mass, inert,
Unalarmed, undisturbed ;
And we, the spirit that moves,
We leaven the mass,
And it changes ;
We sweeten the mass,
Or the world
Would stink in the ether.

TREES

Elm-trees

And the leaf the boy in me hated
Long ago—
Rough and sandy.

Poplars

And their leaves,
Tender, smooth to the fingers,
And a secret in their smell
I have forgotten.

Oaks

And forest glades,
Heart aching with wonder, fear :
Their bitter mast.

Willows

And the scented beetle
We put in our handkerchiefs ;
And the roots of one that spread into a river :
Nakedness, water and joy.

Hawthorn,

White and odorous with blossom,
Framing the quiet fields
And swaying flowers and grasses
And the hum of bees.

Chestnuts,

Apples and pears,
Which we pillaged in the autumn
Of their fruit.

Oh, these are the things that are with me now,
In the town ;
And I am grateful
For this minute of my manhood.

LILAC

O lilac,
Whiter than swan's down,
Among your soft-green leaves,
Purer than snow
New fallen on the boughs,
The white butterfly fluttering
Over your fragrance
Is happy.
I watch you from my window,
And feel on my face and hair
The warm wind blowing across London.

I have many things to hurt me,—
Youth gone and life and friends uncertain ;
And no god will take me
And turn me into a lilac-tree,—
With the world beneath me
For my roots, and each springtime
A myriad tender hearts
For the winds to fondle,
And the startling candour of my blossom
For men to love.

Some god has done this to you,
O lilac,
And the butterfly does not fear you.

OAK

See the grey silver of the oak-boughs,
As they swarm up the hill-slope
And down towards the sea.
The branches twist and twine one over the other,
And the trunks, with the growth of saplings,
Are misshapen and crooked.
The Atlantic winds
Have smoothed them and silvered them,
And then have added the beauty
Time puts upon the work of the silversmith
Carved centuries ago.

But was it for this confusion of boughs,
This profusion of locking twig,
This mingling of leaves,
One twisted tree with another,
That the acorn fell and took root ?
Was this the hope in the seed ?
Must the white sails be spun in vain for the keel ?
Must the house lack the beam and the roof-tree ?

I must have space for my branches,
A field for my roots :
Or men will destroy me !

PLANE-TREE

O tardy plane-tree,
Was not the winter long enough ?
The April sun
Has sprayed with green
The grey house behind the boughs,
And burst the first-lit,
Golden lamps of the chestnut :
Its leaves fall limply
Away from the brown flower-buds ;
He has dressed in pink
The black and naked almond-tree,
Bestrewn the pavement with red-tipped catkins,
And sent the sparrows to find
His pouting buds on every twig,
Excepting yours, O motley plane-tree,
Whom the motor-cars,
In scorn of your laziness,
Spurn with their dust.

SWAN

O Swan,
My eyes watch you through the shallows,
Wounded by your cruel beauty . . .
O white splendour,
You have hurt me.

You do not heed us ;
Our music crashes through the stillness ;
Our shouts crack in the evening ;
We gather round your pool :
The cygnets twist their swart heads
And their crimson beaks, and listen ;
But you do not heed them ;
You do not heed us.

Your yellow feet move
Through the clear, cold water ;
Your belly rests upon your belly,
Soft, cool, caressing ;
Your beak meets your beak ;
Your necks repeat the figures
Two, three, eight and zero.

O twi-shape, O triple nature,
Bird, fish and serpent,
Do you plunge your head
To lose your torment ?
Does your beauty tire you ?

The wind moves the leaves to a sweet sound ;
It bends the sedge and the shallows ;
The tulips sway and the iris ;
But it brings to you the peace of curdled waters,
Where you are no longer.

EVIL

The mist of the evening is rose
In the dying sun,
And the street is quiet between its rows of plane-trees
And the walls of the gardens
With the laurel bushes.

I walk along in a dream
Half aware
Of the empty black of the windows.

One window I pass by :
It is not empty ;
Something shows from it, white, I feel, and round,
Something that pulls me back
To gaze, still dreaming,
To gaze and to wake and stare
At a naked woman—
O Beautiful—
Alone in the window, sitting.

Is there a sign ?
Does she call me ? What is the lure ?
She does not move ;
And I crawl to the gate, and stop,
And open the gate, again stopping,
And crawl again up the stone steps—
Fear driving my heart mad—
Up to the door.

Door, do not open
Though I beat you with my fist !

TERROR

Eyes are tired ;
The lamp burns,
And in its circle of light
Papers and books lie
Where chance and life
Have placed them.

Silence sings all around me ;
My head is bound with a band ;
Outside in the street, a few footsteps ;
A clock strikes the hour.

I gaze, and my eyes close,
Slowly :

I doze ; but the moment before sleep,
A voice calls my name
In my ear,
And the shock jolts my heart ;
But when I open my eyes,
And look, first left, and then right . . .

No one is there.

HOUSES

Evening and quiet :
A bird trills in the poplar-trees
Behind the house with the dark-green door
Across the road.

Into the sky,
The red earthenware and the galvanised-iron chimneys
Thrust their cowl.
The hoot of the steamers on the Thames is plain.

No wind ;
The trees merge, green with green ;
A car whirs by ;
Footsteps and voices take their pitch
In the key of dusk,
Far off and near, subdued.

Solid and square to the world
The houses stand,
Their windows blocked with venetian blinds.

Nothing will move them.

MOMENTS

I.

When I move
I am accomplishing an act foredoomed,
And all the love I bear,
All the hate,
All the cadences my heart beats to,
Went through the brute
Who trapped the mastodon
And carved its image
On the tusk.

II.

I put my arm out to catch yours,
So !
I draw you to me,
Peer into your eyes,
Bear downward to your lips,
And then I kiss you.
Æons and æons ago, before time was,
Some pebble stirred the pool
To bring about this ripple.
This is the end ?
No ! This is the beginning.
I hold you.

III.

If I sit here longer,
Listening to the roar of the silence,
Brooding,
A monster will take shape out of the darkness
Behind the table
And swallow me.

CONES

The blue mist of after-rain
Fills all the trees ;

The sunlight gilds the tops
Of the poplar spires, far off,
Behind the houses.

Here a branch sways
And there
a sparrow twitters.

The curtain's hem, rose-embroidered,
Flutters, and half reveals
A burnt-red chimney pot.

The quiet in the room
Bears patiently
A footfall on the street.

OGRE

Through the open window can be seen
The poplars at the end of the garden
Shaking in the wind,
A wall of green leaves so high
That the sky is shut off.

On the white table cloth
A rose in a vase—
Centre of a sphere of odour—
Contemplates the crumbs and crusts
Left from a meal :
Cups, saucers, plates lie
Here and there.

And a sparrow flies by the open window,
Stops for a moment,
Flutters his wings rapidly,
And climbs an aerial ladder
With his claws
That work close in
To his soft, brown-grey belly.

But behind the table is the face of a man.

The bird flies off.

LAMENT

The young men of the world
Are condemned to death.
They have been called up to die
For the crime of their fathers.

The young men of the world,
The growing, the ripening fruit,
Have been torn from their branches,
While the memory of the blossom
Is sweet in women's hearts ;
They have been cast for a cruel purpose
Into the mashing-press and furnace.

The young men of the world
Look into each other's eyes,
And read there the same words :
Not yet ! Not yet !
But soon perhaps, and perhaps certain.

The young men of the world
No longer possess the road :
The road possesses them.
They no longer inherit the earth :
The earth inherits them.
They are no longer the masters of fire :
Fire is their master ;
They serve him, he destroys them.
They no longer rule the waters :
The genius of the seas
Has invented a new monster,
And they fly from its teeth.
They no longer breathe freely :
The genius of the air
Has contrived a new terror
That rends them into pieces.

The young men of the world
Are encompassed with death.
He is all about them
In a circle of fire and bayonets.

Weep, weep, O women,
And old men break your hearts.

WAR-TIME

If I go out of the door,
It will not be
To take the road to the left that leads
Past the bovine quiet of houses
Brooding over the cud of their daily content,
Even though
The tranquillity of their gardens
Is a lure that once was stronger ;
Even though
From privet hedge and mottled laurel
The young green peeps,
And the daffodils
And the yellow and white and purple crocuses
Laugh from the smooth mould
Of the garden beds
To the upright golden buds of the chestnut-trees.
I shall not see
The almond blossom shaming
The soot-black boughs.

But to the right the road will lead me
To greater and greater disquiet ;
Into the swift rattling noise of the motor-'buses
And the dust, the tattered paper—
The detritus of a city—
That swirls in the air behind them.
I will pass the shops where the prices
Are judged day by day by the people,
And come to the place where five roads meet
With five tram routes,
And where, amid the din
Of the vans, the lorries, the motor-'buses,
The clangorous tramcars,
The news is shouted
And soldiers gather, off duty.

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Here I can feel the heat of Europe's fever ;
And I can make,
As each man makes the beauty of the woman he loves,
No spring and no woman's beauty,
While that is burning.

SOLDIERS

To R.A.

Brother,
I saw you on a muddy road
In France
Pass by with your battalion,
Rifle at the slope, full marching order,
Arm swinging ;
And I stood at ease,
Folding my hands over my rifle,
With my battalion.
You passed me by, and our eyes met.
We had not seen each other since the days
We climbed the Devon hills together :
Our eyes met, startled ;
And, because the order was Silence,
We dared not speak.

O face of my friend,
Alone distinct of all that company,
You went on, you went on,
Into the darkness ;
And I sit here at my table,
Holding back my tears,
With my jaw set and my teeth clenched,
Knowing I shall not be
Even so near you as I saw you
In my dream.

ZEPPELINS

The bedroom is darkness.
A dim cloud in one direction
Is the window with its curtains ;
The leaves of the trees outside rustle on one another.
I fall to sleep.

How long have I slept ?
A voice calls, a bell rings ;
The clamour and the ringing lengthen ;
I turn ; it continues ;
Not mine the name I hear,
And yet
There is alarm in it that concerns me.

Am I awake ?
Over my nightdress
I huddle my clothes ;
Thrust my bare feet into slippers ;
And run down the stairs.

From a blur of female faces
Distraught eyes stand out,
And a woman's voice cries :
" The Zeppelins—they are attacking us ;
Kingsland Road is alight,
Stoke Newington is burning.
Did you not hear the guns ?
Oh, what shall we do ! "

We make jokes to reassure them.
I shiver : chill ? excitement ? fear ?
Am I awake ?
My mind has been washed by sleep and left limp.

The trees in the gardens opposite
Stand out behind the houses,
A dark fretwork against the sky ;
And everywhere is stillness.

Yet something slinks overhead through the sky ;
Men will say that they saw it pass, and then
A flash, a thud, a roar,—
A house has been cleft through three stories, and
 burns ;
And children burn in their beds,
And men are burned rescuing them ;
An old man and woman are burned to death
Because the staircase has been smashed away.

But we do not know this yet ;
We have only heard explosions,
And have seen the glow of fires in the sky,
Quickly gone.

We climb upstairs to the top story,—
To see !
There is nothing to see . . .
But the silence and stillness are sinister.
What has been taken away, what added ?
Brick and stone have become unreal,
And only the primeval trees remain,
With the primeval fear behind them and among
 them . . .

What is that behind the trees ?—
A flame-coloured circle of light that glows
And grows brighter and dimmer by turns.
Is it an airship on fire ?
It burns on, and moves nearer, slowly ;
It swings clear of the trees—
The moon !

SEARCHLIGHT

There has been no sound of guns,
No roar of exploding bombs ;
But the darkness has an edge
That grits the nerves of the sleeper.

He awakens ;
Nothing disturbs the stillness,
Save perhaps the light, slow flap,
Once only, of the curtain
Dim in the darkness.

Yet there is something else
That drags him from his bed ;
And he stands in the darkness
With his feet cold against the floor
And the cold air round his ankles.
He does not know why,
But he goes to the window and sees
A beam of light, miles high,
Dividing the night into two before him,
Still, stark and throbbing.

The houses and gardens beneath
Lie under the snow
Quiet and tinged with purple.

There has been no sound of guns,
No roar of exploding bombs ;
Only that watchfulness hidden among the snow-
covered houses,
And that great beam thrusting back into heaven
The light taken from it.

HATS

The hollow sound of your hard felt hat
As you clap it on your head
Is echoed over two thousand miles of trenches
By a thousand thousand guns;
And thousands of thousands of men have been
killed,
And still more thousands of thousands have bled
And been maimed and have drowned
Because of that sound.

Towns battered and shattered,
Villages blasted to dust and mud,
Forests and woods stripped bare,
Rivers and streams befouled,
The earth between and beyond the lines
Ravaged and sown with steel
And churned with blood
And astink with decaying men,
Nations starving, women and children murdered,
Genius destroyed, minds deformed and twisted,
And waste, waste, waste
Of the earth's fruits, of the earth's riches,—
All in obedience to your voice;
And the sound of your hat
Is in the same gamut of void and thoughtless
And evil sounds.

O estimable man,
Keeper of the season ticket,
Walker on the pavement,
Follower of the leader writer,
Guardian of the life policy,
Insured against all harm—
Fire, burglary, servants' accidents—

Warden and ward of the church,
Wallflower of the suburbs,
Primrose of respectability,
As you go home beneath your hard felt hat
The tradesmen do you homage.
Happily, the trees do not know you.

You have scoffed at the poet,
Because you are a practical man :
And does not your house bear you out ?
Have poets such houses ?
It has a garden in front with a plot of grass,
And in the middle of that a flower-bed.
With a rose-tree in its midst, and other rose-trees
Against the walls, and a privet hedge,
And stocks and delphiniums, flowers in season !
The path is irregularly paved for quaintness ;
There is a rustic porch, and a street door
With a polished brass letter-box and knocker,
And stained glass panels, showing a bird and flowers,
And an electric-bell push.
But you have a key, and you let yourself in
To the quiet red-tiled hall, where the doormat
Says " Welcome," and the stand receives your umbrella
And your coat and your hard felt hat.
A drawing-room, a dining-room (because
All your fellows have them), and a kitchen
All clean and neat ; and because the kitchen is
comfortable
You have your tea there with your wife and child—
Only one child, for are you not practical ?
On the upper floor are a bathroom and three bedrooms.
Let your furniture stand undisturbed,
I will not describe it : a hundred shops in London
Show off the like in their windows. As for your books,

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They are as haphazard and as futile as your pictures.
But here is your comfort and you are comfortable ;
And on summer evenings and Saturday afternoons
You wander out into the garden at the back,
Which is fenced off on three sides from similar gardens,
And you potter around with garden tools and are
happy.

O insured against all harm,
Waiter on the pension at sixty,
Domestic vegetable, cultivated flower,
You have laughed at the poet, the unpractical dreamer :
You have seen life as book-keeping and accountancy ;
Your arithmetic has pleased you, your compound
interest,
Your business, more than the earth and the heavens ;
And if your brother suffered, you took no heed,
Or read a liberal newspaper, and salved your conscience.
Ant, ant, oblivious of the water being boiled in the
cauldron !

But when the time came for your chastisement,
For the punishment of your apathy, your will-less
ignorance,
When the atmospheric pressure was just equivalent
To the weight of the seventy-six centimetre column
of mercury,
And the water had exactly reached the hundredth
degree of centigrade,
You felt, though you feared it, that the time had come,
That you had something called a collective honour,
some patriotism ;
And those others too felt the same honourable
sentiment,

And you called for the slaughter that sanctifies honour,
And the boiling water was poured on us all. Ants !
Ants !

Friend and brother, you have not been killed ;
Chance still allows you to wear your bowler hat,
The helmet of the warrior in its degeneracy,
The symbol of gracelessness and of the hate of beauty,
The signature of your sameness and innocuousness.

Take off your hat ; let your hair grow ; open your
eyes ;
Look at your neighbour ; his suffering is your hurt.
Become dangerous ; let the metaphysical beast
Whose breath poisons us all fear your understanding,
And recoil from our bodies, his prey, and fall back
before you,
And shiver and quake and thirst and starve and die.

TO A YOUNG LADY WHO MOVED SHYLY AMONG MEN OF REPUTED WORTH

The olive sky shone through the birch's lace
Of hanging leaves. The silken air was still.
London was beautiful. A tender thrill
Of sunset shook throughout the evening's grace.

Under an apple tree I stood a space,
And watched the birds hop on the lawn, until
Darkness had bent all image to his will,
When oh ! upon the rapt sky dawned your face !

Be brave, O Moon, lonely among the stars.
Be unrebuked and radiant, they will pale ;
And Earth will love you for your loveliness.

My brain beats madly at the golden bars
That stay it, and my heart would have me scale
The moonlit branches where the night winds press.

SCHOOLDAYS

Hours of a slow, hot afternoon,
So far away, vibrating still,
When eyes would watch upon the sill
A sparrow heedless of the school.

Hours of the book and furtive play,
Pinches passed on, and then the cane,
And sobbing or a cheek's proud flame,
Hours living still, yet far away.

Yet far away,—the teacher ? He
Only a dim remembrance, but
The ink-stained desk with ruts and cut
With many initials I can see.

Hours packed with heat and silence,—oh !
The bark more rugged and the tree
More coarse have yet their melody,—
Hours of my schooldays, hours of long ago.

CLEOPATRA

Silently gazing from the tower, apart,
The Queen, whose night-black hair is bound with
braid,
Feels, in the trance of censers slowly swayed,
Your sea, O immense Love, mount in her heart.

Her eyelids close on dreams, and she is laid
Among her cushions, swooning as she rests ;
The heavy gold chains lifted by her breasts
Tell the mute, fevered longing of the maid.

Over the monuments float strange farewells ;
The evening, soft with shade, is full of spells ;
And, while the crocodiles far distant weep,

The Queen, hands clenched and sobbing to have
sinned,
Shudders to feel lascivious fingers creep
Among her hair and spend it to the wind.

After Albert Samain.

PHANTASMS

The snow falls in the gauzy night,
And with faint nimbuses aglow,
A white saint and his angel go,
Drunk with delight, drunk with delight.

The deep moonshine upon them streams,
And in their shadow following
Two viol-scrapers dance and sing,
Drunk with their dreams, drunk with their dreams.

Leaving the mad brown earth too soon,
Wherein their bones found time too long,
Two skeletons take up the song,
Drunk with the moon, drunk with the moon.

From Louis Le Cardonnel.

THE SHELL

Through what cold Oceans, since what ancient year,
—O pearly Shell and fragile, who shall say !—
The surge, the current and the tide have they
Whirled you in their abysses green and drear ?

Far from the bitter floods, you now have here
Made a soft bed of golden sand and grey ;
Your hope is vain ; long and despairing, aye
In you the sea's great moaning voice we hear.

Sonorous to its core my soul is, for,
As from your whorl in plaintive accents pour
The sob and sighing of the sea's old stir,

So dull and slow and yet eternal well
The far-off, stormy, murmuring beat and swell
From the depth of this heart too full of Her.

From José-Maria de Heredia.

FROM MARDRUS'S "MILLE NUITS ET UNE
NUIT"

SHE :

Under my Koufa veil I bring thee flowers,
And fruits still powdered with the sun's gold showers.

HE :

All the gold of Soudan is on thy skin,
O Well-Beloved ! . . . The sunbeams gaily spin
Thy hair ; and no Damascus loom could weave
A velvet like thine eyes.

SHE :

Behold ! At eve,
When the warm hour of dusk propitiously
Opens his silky arms, I come to thee ! . . .
The light air dances in the limpid night ;
And leaves and waters murmur our delight !

HE :

O my Gazelle of Night ! O my Surprise !
Darkness is dazzled wholly with thine eyes.
Ah ! Let me plunge into them and emerge
Drunk as the bird that revels in the surge.

SHE :

Come nearer ! Take their roses from my lips.
Then, when my body from its chalice slips
Slowly, I shall, from head to heel, at last
Be naked but for thee . . .

HE :

O Unsurpassed ! . . .

SHE :

O my Beloved ! Behold ! The secret fruit
Of my moon-flesh, thou knowest, has the form
Of the ripe date. Come ! . . . Thou wilt hear the
 bruit
Of seas where birds are drunken in the storm !

THE POOR

And so there are poor hearts, poor hearts,
With lakes of bitter tears in them,
And they are death-pale like the stones
Of cemeteries.

And so there are poor backs, poor backs,
Heavier with trouble and with burdens
Than the roofs of the brown cassines
Among the dunes.

And so there are poor hands, poor hands,
Like the leaves upon the roads,
Like the yellow leaves and sad
Before the door.

And so there are poor eyes, poor eyes,
Humble and good and yet careworn,
And sadder than the eyes of beasts
Beneath the storm.

And so there are poor folk, poor folk,
With tired indulgent gestures who
Are harried by a griping dearth
Along the level plains of earth.

From Emile Verhaeren.

ODELET

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If I have spoken
Of my love, it is to the slow stream
That hearkens when I lean
Above it ; if I have spoken
Of my love, it is to the wind
That laughs and whispers in the leaves ;
If I have spoken of my love, it is to the bird
That passes singing
With the wind ;
If I have spoken,
The echo heard.

If I have loved with a great love,
In sad or joyous wise,
It was your eyes ;
If I have loved with a great love,
It was your mouth so grave and sweet,
It was your mouth ;
If I have loved with a great love,
It was your warm flesh and your cool fresh hands,
And it is your shadow that I seek.

From Henri de Régnier.

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